

Comprehensive Plan

Submitted by Great Divide Pictures

Act 1. Scene 1.

Cut to small cramped theatre. House lights dim. A scratched film print begins to play. Overly dramatic music is followed by a narrator's voice delivered in ultra-monotone....

(V/O Narrator)

"This was once a great inland sea. Creatures roamed its watery depths and....."

The scene above, or something closely resembling it, played for years at our national parks. But it's rarely experienced these days. Exceptional photography, spectacular aerial images, celebrity narrators, memorable music, and most importantly, remarkable storytelling have all become trademarks of films produced for the National Park Service.

For over ten years, Great Divide Pictures has been at the forefront of producers creating a new generation of films for the NPS – films offering tremendous production value while adhering to the park service mission of providing *interpretive* audiovisual materials. For Great Divide, these goals have always been entwined – to create engaging stories accompanied by fine imagery and sophisticated sound. But at the core of our films beats an interpretive “heart” – one that delivers meaning and substance for the park visitor – a story that helps them to understand this place, this event, this *park* – and its place in our nation's larger story.

About Great Divide Pictures

The principals, Sonny Hutchison and Chris Wheeler bring more than 50 years experience of creating award-winning television and producing more than 60 documentaries that have aired nationally. Hutchison attended the American Film Institute as a Cinematography Fellow. Wheeler's roots are in photojournalism. In 1987, the National Press Photographers Association honored him as the “Photographer of the Year.” Throughout our careers, we have been recognized nationally for our work. “How the West Was Lost” received a Cine Golden Eagle, CableAce, and Western Heritage Award. The critically acclaimed 13-part series was reviewed by nearly every major newspaper in the country. Another documentary, “Godspeed, John Glenn,” was given the Grand Award in the Worldfest Houston competition. Narrated by broadcasting legend Walter Cronkite, “Godspeed, John Glenn” told the dramatic story of the astronaut's 1962 orbital flight aboard Friendship 7. “Our Time in Hell: The Korean War” was lauded by the Denver Post as “an old fashion documentary in the best sense,” and “the definitive documentary on the subject.” This year, several of our NPS films (Moores Creek, John Muir, Washita) were honored at Worldfest Houston. “Destiny at Dawn: Loss & Victory on the Washita” received a Special Jury Medal, one of the top honors of the entire Festival. “Life After Katrina,” produced in 2006 for HGTV, was given the Gold WorldMedal in the News

Documentary category at the New York Festivals. Currently in production is “Warriors,” a 10-part documentary series that will premiere on History Channel in February 2009.

In addition to being principals of Great Divide Pictures, Wheeler & Hutchison are also partners and co-founders of High Noon Entertainment, one of the largest providers of original programming in the US. In the past year, High Noon has produced more than 400 hours of programming for cable networks like HGTV, Food Network, History Channel, TLC and Animal Planet. Sonny & Chris help lead a staff of 100 creative and talented people. To learn more about High Noon, please go to: www.highnoonentertainment.com.

Great Divide Pictures also brings a decade of producing specifically for the National Park Service. From rich natural history films to big reenactment dramas, over the past ten years we’ve created films for a diverse group of parks:

- Great Smoky Mountains National Park
- Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
- Wind Cave National Park
- Shenandoah National Park
- Pea Ridge National Military Park
- Moores Creek National Battlefield
- Fort Frederica National Historic Site
- Washita Battlefield National Historic Site
- Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve
- Cowpens National Battlefield
- Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway
- John Muir National Historic Site
- Gulf Islands National Seashore (currently in production)
- Pipestone National Monument (currently in production)
- Sitka National Historical Park – Russian Bishop’s House (currently in production)
- Ninety Six (in pre-production)

Our philosophy in working with the park service is simple: a great film is the product of listening to and collaborating with the park staff. One of the joys of producing these films is getting to know the dedicated people who are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their park. Our challenge is to create a film that *interprets* the park in an emotional, informative, and entertaining way. Because of our extensive experience with the NPS, we understand what is at stake – that decisions made today will impact a film that will be played in the Visitor Center for up to 20 years. We also realize the money spent to create these films is significant. As producers, we know that the making of a film can be intimidating to those not experienced in our medium; we make every effort to communicate clearly about the process. We are proud to say that every park with which we’ve worked has been very happy with not only the film but also the process of *making*

the film. We are enthusiastic, sensitive to the park and park service needs, and low maintenance.

“Working with the park” – what does that mean? In our experience, it has quite a *practical* definition. In planning our film and script, it means we listen closely to park staff as to what the film’s goals are. As scripts are written, it’s feedback and discussions about the story’s direction. And as shooting begins we share DVDs of all footage with the park so they can see the imagery and sound we’ve captured. Editing is critical and as “rough cuts” are produced, the park receives copies; now, the film is beginning to take shape and the edits provide a clear vision of the film’s course. As each stage of editing occurs we have thorough discussions with park staff about music, graphics, title design, even reviews of closed captions and audio description – important elements for visitors who are hearing or visually impaired. Constant *communication* with the park at each step of production ensures the film’s quality, timeliness, and its effectiveness for the visitors who will see it for many years to come.

Because of our experience, we thoroughly understand the concept of “interpretation,” and enjoy the challenge of creating films that bring to life each park’s specific interpretive mission. We constantly go the extra mile, bringing great value to our productions. On a more personal level, we strongly believe in the National Park Service mission of preserving these places for future generations, and strive to create films that help visitors respect and appreciate these magnificent sites.

In addition to serving as producers/directors, Sonny and Chris are principal photographers who have years of experience filming in high definition. And while we partner with various writers, the producers of Great Divide are also important contributors in the creation of the script. In addition to co-writing the scripts, Hutchison manages the production. Wheeler also writes and supervises the offline edit. Together, we work closely with music composers and audio post engineers. Sonny and Chris are a great team who are in synch with each other as well as with the parks in which we work.

The Crafting of a Film

How do we bring together diverse creative elements and craft them into a cohesive film that is entertaining and educational while fulfilling a park’s interpretive mission? Following are the tools & methods we employ as film producers.

Pre-Production

Our film begins with reading and research. But a true sense of the direction the film takes begins with our first visit to the park – walking the ground, meeting with staff, getting a sense of the *place* and its story. Pre-production is critical because this is where the direction for our script begins – we discover what’s important to park staff; what characters are most important; and what seasons we will visit for our shoots. This is the

planning stage and what we accomplish here will affect the entire process of creating the park's new film.

Writing

As producers/directors of our park service films, we invest a great deal of time, thought, and energy into creating an emotional, informative and entertaining script. Often, we partner with writers who we feel can bring a unique perspective in interpreting the park's story. Even then, however, our imprint on the final script is significant.

Our philosophy towards the writing of most scripts falls into the 'less is more' category. This is not meant to diminish the importance of the written word, but to underscore the other key elements of the film. The words will be powerful yet sparse, clear yet concise. Interviews with historians and experts, park staff included, are conducted. From the interviews, the most eloquent, emotional and insightful clips will be incorporated into the script. These interviews will serve two purposes: 1) to provide a compelling narrative that helps tell the park's story; and 2) to give context to the park or a particular element of our story. In addition to on camera interviews, we often use historic quotes. These quotes, read with an appropriate accent by professional actors, can be an effective way of telling compelling *personal* stories of main characters.

Finally, a critical component of the script is the rhythm in which the words and on-camera interviews are edited. The written words are organically woven with the other elements of the script – music, natural sounds, primary source quotations - to create a seamless soundtrack that works in harmony with the edited footage.

Photography

In addition to producing, we continue to be the principal photographers in all of our NPS projects. Using a variety of high definition cameras, we capture stunning images of the parks at 24p – giving the footage a distinct “film” look. Often we incorporate a jib or small camera crane into our productions. The sweeping shots captured by this cinematic tool bring grace, movement, and energy as well as overhead perspectives visitors are unable to see from ground level. Additionally, we often budget for aerial images if we feel it will benefit the story – capturing the vastness and beauty of the landscape.

Another photographic tool we employ is time-lapse photography. We station our time-lapse camera in strategic places in park sites to capture changing light and cloud movement. These images can be effectively used to help convey the dramatic points in our storytelling. Invariably, our films always come back to the *landscape* and the very sites on which history unfolded.

Great Divide can produce in standard definition as well as high definition. And, if requested and budgeted, we can produce in film – 16mm or 35mm.

Reenactments

Historical reenactments have become an important element in many of our films. These reenactments range from small and impressionistic, to large and cinematic. The results, however, are the same - believable, historically accurate scenes that bring history alive.

Quite often we will engage reenactment groups known for their authenticity. For main characters, we will conduct casting sessions; the goal is to find the right “voice” and presence for historic figures. Employing experts in props and clothing, we pay close attention to historical detail in our wardrobe and weaponry choices.

Graphics

Innovative 3-D graphics and animations play a key role in our films by illustrating concepts that are hard to imagine or cannot be experienced any other way. For various films, we have created historic maps, geologic changes, river and stream erosion, military movements, and more. And because we have a graphics department associated with our affiliated company, High Noon Entertainment, we have ready access and quality control of graphics and title design.

Music

Perhaps no element of the filmmaking process is more subjectively scrutinized than the creation of its music. As a powerful storytelling tool, music conveys drama and emotion, and at its best, connects viewers to the subject matter.

Great Divide works closely with a number of composers. Some are better suited to period and historic themes and instrumentation. Others are adept at bigger orchestral sounds. Native American music requires authentic instruments and sensibilities; we have several composers who create native themes.

And though our feelings about music can be subjective, Great Divide works closely with the park staff and the composer to be sure expectations are met. In our editing phase we will employ music the composers emulate in their compositions. If the placeholder music is working, more often than not, our composers will achieve the same or better results.

One more note on music. We feel that most films require a mixture of musical approaches – at places a simpler melodic theme; at other points a period piece; and perhaps a strong orchestral theme to carry the beginning and end of the story. Whatever the mix, just one “sound” or theme cannot carry the entire film – an eclectic mix of musical pieces adhering to a theme seems most effective in our experience.

Sound Design

Perhaps as much as compelling imagery, *sound* plays a vital role in our film presentations. From the natural sounds the landscape offers – wildlife, wind, flowing water – to the sounds of battle – gunshots, artillery, horses, men screaming – Great Divide pays close attention to the design of the soundtrack. For nearly 20 years we have worked closely with an audio design company in Denver – Valentine Pro. We feel their audio design is unsurpassed. The reason? Their attention to detail – the *right* sound of the river’s flow in our Black Canyon film, the *right* sound of the migrating songbird in our Great Smoky Mountains project, and the *authentic* sound of muskets firing in our Cowpens production.

The result of this attention to detail is a soundtrack combining narration, music, interviews, and natural sounds in an artful, harmonious fashion – a soundtrack that doesn’t call attention to itself but compliments the film immeasurably.

Creating surroundsound tracks has become the norm for most NPS films. Great Divide and Valentine Pro are experts in surroundsound – typically 5.1. If the theatre design allows for additional tracks, e.g., 7.1 surroundsound, Great Divide's soundtrack can easily accommodate the design at no additional cost.

Subcontractors

Through our work in both Great Divide Pictures and High Noon Entertainment, we are constantly collaborating with individuals or companies who are subcontractors on our projects. We search for companies who provide services at a reasonable cost and of high quality. A few examples of services we subcontract for are: lighting crews, audio design, helicopter services, props and wardrobe, narrators, composers, makeup, special effects, graphics, and many others. Filmmaking is a highly collaborative experience; we enjoy working with a team and have years of experience managing lighting, sound, and support while shooting. Likewise, once we are in the post-production phase, we manage another team of editors, composers, and graphics artists to ensure our film stays on schedule and on budget while achieving the goal of a great film.

Rights in Data

Great Divide Pictures recognizes the need to obtain unlimited rights to original materials/data created under our contracts with the National Park Service. We also understand the need to obtain one-time-use agreements for certain stock footage, stills, and personal memorabilia incorporated in the finished production. Appearance releases and/or contracts granting appropriate rights will be obtained from all participants in the film – both on camera and off.

Quality Assurance

Great Divide will work diligently to assure quality productions at every level for the National Park Service. Through a process of intense collaboration with the individual parks and our COTR plus thorough review of every phase of production – script, shoot, and edit – Great Divide will create projects that meet or exceed NPS expectations.

Project Completion

Creation and delivery of our video/film projects are only a part of the process. Great Divide recognizes the importance of delivering completion reports – documentation of all releases, contracts, logs, source tapes, script, credits – all the materials requested in the RFP document for each type of production. Completion reports will be provided in a timely manner per the production schedule for each project.